

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

A PORTRAIT OF KING HENRY VIII AS A KNIGHT OF THE GARTER

Compiled by Hope Walker, MPhil/PhD Candidate | The Courtauld Institute of Art

In June, 1567 one of Trinity College's first Vice-Chancellors, and erstwhile Master of the College, Robert Beaumont, died. In his will Beaumont bequeathed this large panel portrait to the Trinity Library, along with five other pictures as well as a significant portion of his personal library (Figure One).¹ Although this portrait is dated 1567, technical studies indicate that the '7' is a later addition.² Since King Henry was also the founder and patron of Trinity College, it is possible that Beaumont commissioned this work after his initial appointment as Master in 1561, and sometime prior to his death in 1567, as a tribute to the founder of the College.

This picture is one of at least six 16th century copies of a portrait of King Henry VIII that follow Holbein's lost wall-painting in the Privy Chamber at Whitehall Palace, painted in 1538.³ Today, all that remains of that original mural is a portion of the cartoon in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London (Figure Two) and a smaller copy of the complete mural by Remigius van Leemput in the Royal Collection (Figure Three). The vast majority of the copyists of Holbein's mural portrait of Henry VIII remain unknown; this picture, however, is unique in that it is signed with Eworth's monogram.

Another of the unique aspects of the Trinity portrait is that it does not depict Henry within Holbein's architectural and genealogical space.⁴ Here the column and other architectural elements, as well as any suggestion of his father Henry VII, have been set aside and are replaced by the cartouche and text at the center, bottom and the large Garter emblem at the top right of the picture.

¹ Will of Robert Beaumont, Cambridge University Archive, U.I. Wills II, 1567, fol. 45v. "...I gyve to Trynitie colledg wherof I am master – xlli to the stallynge / and glasyng of the new lybrarye Item I gyve to the sayed trinitie colledg all those Dyvynitie books onlye which I have / and the colledge wantethe Thirdly I gyve to Trynitie colledg my syxe pictures of our fownder / his parents and child to be set in the librarye assone as it is as buylded and there to remayne as longe as they laste In the meane space to be fayre and warely kepte in the mres' lodgyng." The picture was never moved to the Library and remained in the Masters Lodge Dining Hall until 1912, when it was then moved to the Main Dining Hall, where it remains today. See C.H. Hartshorne, *The Book Rarities in the University of Cambridge*, London, 1829, 482.

² Xanthe Brooke et al, *Henry VIII Revealed: Holbein's Portrait and its Legacy*, London 2003, 89.

³ The other copies—at Chatsworth (#49), Walker Art Gallery, Petworth House, Belvoir Castle, and Parham House—are believed to be based upon that original Whitehall mural, which was destroyed by fire in 1698. For details on these works see, Xanthe Brooke et al, *Henry VIII*, 74-5.

⁴ Technical examinations suggest that the underdrawing in the Chatsworth picture is virtually identical to that of the Trinity picture. Today, the Chatsworth picture is attributed to Eworth based upon that similarity. See Xanthe Brooke et al, *Henry VIII Revealed*, 54.

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The Order of the Garter is an ancient chivalric order, probably founded by Edward III in the 1340s.⁵ By the time that Henry VIII came to the throne the Order was made up of the King and 24 (primarily) English Knights. Places within the order were greatly coveted; it was, according to Raymond Waddington, “the most glittering prize of (Henry VIII’s) reign.”⁶ Henry’s use of the Order was primarily political, and often dynastic as well, bestowing favor on trusted intimates while furthering his own claims to ancient royalty.⁷ In 1536, for example, Henry used the Garter celebrations in order to announce the election of Sir Nicholas Carew to the Order, selecting him over Lord Rochford, Queen Anne’s brother. This event was to have two-fold repercussions: it was seen as a very public precursor of Anne’s later downfall while simultaneously reasserting Henry’s right to rule.⁸

The court of Henry VIII was also a place of splendor and pageantry and the Garter celebrations were a central event, acting as what Roy Strong describes as “a reinforcement of medieval hierarchical principles and an affirmation of chivalrous ideals.”⁹ The typical celebration consisted of three days of banquets and processions in which the Knights of the Garter honored the Sovereign. Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder’s 1576 engraving of the *Procession of the Garter* is exemplar of the kind of formal processions held during the Garter celebrations, particularly under Elizabeth I, where they would become extremely popular among the general populace (Figure 4).¹⁰ The engraving is also evocative of the Trinity picture in the presence of the Garter emblem above each knight and the cartouche, with inscriptions, below.¹¹

⁵ However, Lisa Jefferson argues for a later date, suggesting that it was probably founded by Henry V in 1415. For more see Lisa Jefferson, “MS Arundel 48 and the Earliest Statutes of the Order of the Garter,” in *The English Historical Review*, 109(431), April 1994, 356-385.

⁶ Raymond Waddington, “Elizabeth I and the Order of the Garter,” in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24(1), Spring 1993, 100-1.

⁷ Grace Holmes, *The Order of the Garter: Its Knights and Stall Plates, 1348-1948*, Windsor: 1984, 17-19, 168-78.

⁸ Raymond Waddington, ‘*Elizabeth I*’, 100-1. The start of the annual Order celebrations also fell on St. George’s Day (April 23), which was the same day that Henry was proclaimed King in 1509. As such, the Order must have had a very personal meaning to Henry, linked as it was to the start of his reign. For more see George Hall, *Henry VIII, King of England*, London, 1550 (printed 1904), 187.

⁹ Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*, London, 1977, 165.

¹⁰ Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 173.

¹¹ The Trinity portrait is the first dated portrait I am aware of in which the Order of the Garter is presented with such importance. It is therefore possible that the Trinity portrait is the instigator of this artistic trope or, at the very least, the first extant expression of it.

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The Order of the Garter also had religious implications for the Tudors. Henry VIII, for example, completed St. George's Chapel, at Windsor Castle, in 1528 and it was here that the Garter ceremonies were often performed. It was also here that Henry was buried, alongside Queen Jane, in February, 1547.¹² In March, 1553, Edward VI drafted changes to the statutes of the Order of the Garter that would have removed any veneration to St. George, whom Edward saw as an “obscure sup[er]sticion”, replacing the saint's image with that of a knight astride a horse.¹³ He also shifted the annual Garter feast from St. George's Day to Whitsunday—a day in commemoration of the foundation of the Protestant church.¹⁴ Although Mary I would subsequently nullify these statutes, under Elizabeth I many of the Garter statues under Edward VI returned, with some additional modifications: the gospels were read in the vernacular and the elevation of the host was eliminated from the Mass.¹⁵

These issues were not unimportant to Robert Beaumont, who was an ardent Calvinist at Cambridge. In 1565, he campaigned against clergy wearing surplices in church, baptisms by laity, and for the defacement of images of the Trinity.¹⁶ In his will he also indicated his desire to be buried as a Protestant, writing “no vayne Jangelynge of belles nor anye other popishe ceremonyes or mystrustfull prayers [be used at my funeral] as though my happye state with god were doubtfull.”¹⁷

The Trinity portrait concerns itself with dynasty, but less biologically so than was the case in Holbein's mural. Instead, attention is drawn to the chivalric legacy of the Garter, as manifest by the emblems present within the picture, and Henry VIII's place within that dynasty.¹⁸ The Trinity portrait, therefore, may be seen as an image that presents King Henry VIII as the chivalric knight whose heroic actions founded Beaumont's beloved church and College in England.

¹² Ralph Houlbrooke, “Death, Will, and Succession,” in *Man & Monarch: Henry VIII*, British Library, 2009, 258.

¹³ John King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, Princeton, 1989, 101.

¹⁴ In 1548 Edward (and the Privy Council) removed the requiem for departed knights. For this, and other, changes see Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 166-7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Robert Greaves, “Robert Beaumont,” in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed online 10 May, 2010.

¹⁷ Will of Robert Beaumont, Cambridge University Archive, U.I. Wills II, 1567, fol. 45v.

¹⁸ There are further, albeit smaller, hints at the Order in the blue garter Henry wears on his proper left leg and in the black felt hat that he wears—both are symbols of the Order.

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Figure One

Portrait of Henry VIII

Hans Eworth

c. 1562-7

Oil on 5 Baltic Oak Panels [Glazed]

90 1/3 x 49 in. (229.6 x 124.1 cm)

Trinity College, Cambridge [Trinity College Number 84]

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Figure 2

King Henry VII and King Henry VIII

Hans Holbein the Younger

1536-7

Ink and watercolour on paper

101 ½ x 54 in. (257.8 x 137.2 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, London [NPG 4027]

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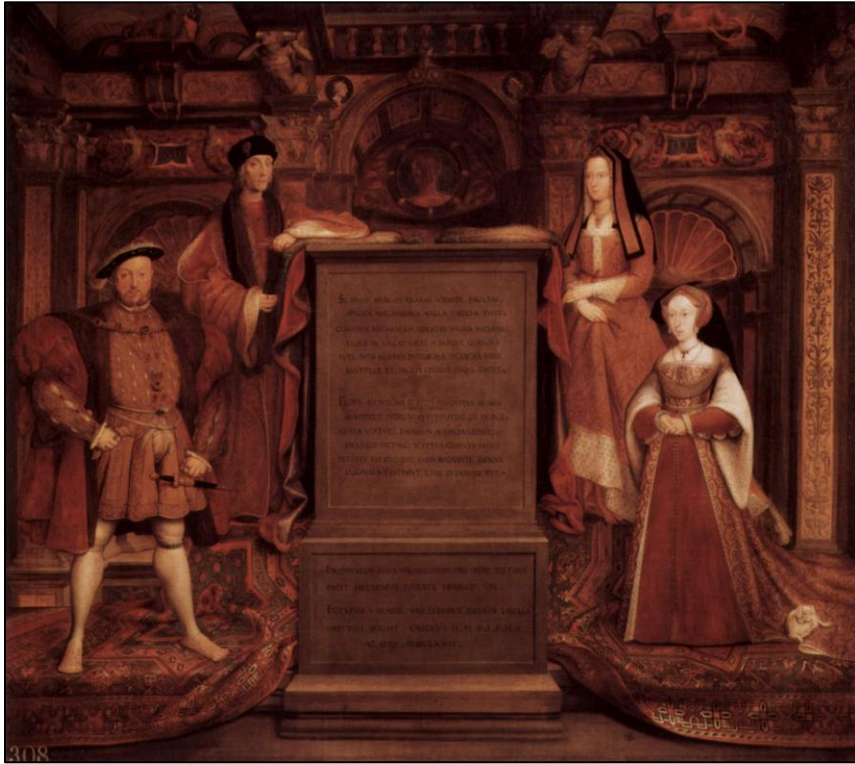


Figure 3

Copy after Holbein's Whitehall Mural

Remigius van Leemput

1667

Oil on canvas

35 x 38 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (88.9 x 98.7 cm)

The Royal Collection [RCIN 405750]

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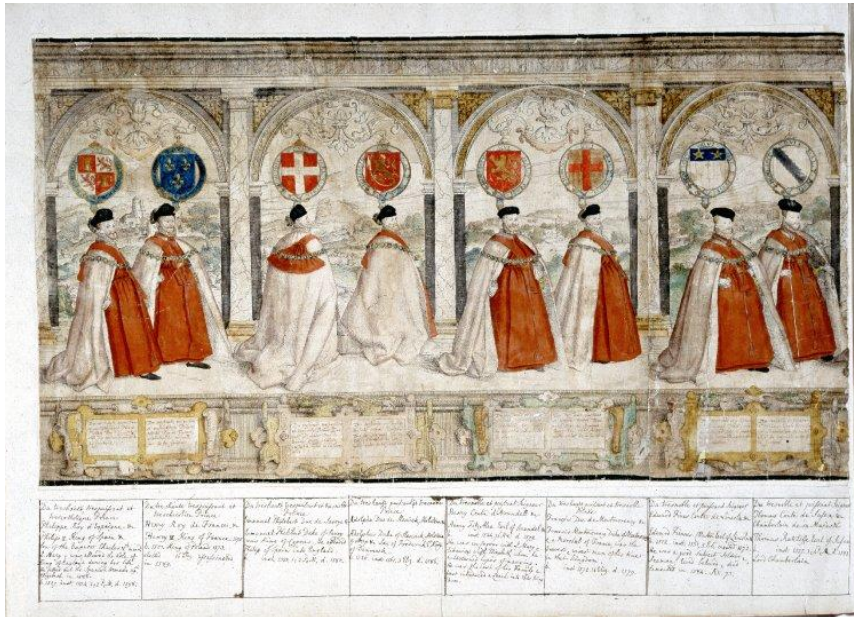


Figure 4

Procession of the Garter [Folio 3]

Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder

1576

Colored Etching (on paper)

11 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 21 in. (30 x 54 cm)

British Museum [1892,0628.194.3]